

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 15, 2005

The Honorable Jim Nussle
Chairman
House Budget Committee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Spratt
Ranking Member
House Budget Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Nussle and Ranking Member Spratt:

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides a vital safety net for our nation's low income households. For many low-income families, disabled individuals and senior citizens living on fixed incomes, home energy costs are unaffordable. These families often carry a higher energy burden than most Americans – spending up to 17 percent of their income on home energy bills. We are writing to request that the budget allocation for the income support function provide \$3 billion for LIHEAP in fiscal 2006. With \$3 billion in regular funding, LIHEAP can help working low-income families, senior citizens and disabled individuals maintain economic stability.

Since 1981, the number of households eligible for LIHEAP assistance has grown, while the number of households served has declined. Last year, states served only about 15 percent of the 30 million households who are eligible for assistance. We recognize the difficult choices that you face in shaping the fiscal 2006 budget. However, we believe that the continued growth in households eligible for LIHEAP assistance demonstrates that the need for funding for this program has never been greater. The LIHEAP program remains seriously under funded. The program needs over \$3 billion simply to equal the purchasing power it provided in 1982.

Energy is a basic need, and without LIHEAP assistance, low income families and senior citizens face the impossible choice between paying their home energy bills or affording other basic necessities such as prescription drugs, housing and food. The Boston Medical Center found that many poor children with chronic health conditions start to lose weight and suffer additional health problems associated with malnutrition in the winter because their families are spending less of their income on food and medicine and more on fuel bills.

Demand for LIHEAP assistance is likely to remain high and continue to grow given the high energy burden faced by low-income households and slow job growth. Three billion dollars for the regular program and advanced funding will help states reach a greater percentage of the 30 million eligible households by creating an effective and broad safety net for those people least able to pay their utility bills. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Robert A. Ash

Gobby L. Dugh

Am. J. J. J. J.

Edith L. Enyol

Melissa Hunt

Russ Holt

Vito J. J. J.

Phil English

Charles F. Bass

Clare E. Cildae

William C. Cildae

John L. L. L.

James Baldwin

John W. Oliver

Thomas Allen

Ruben Emanuel

Julie Carson

Jo' E. Saxano
Barnett ranch

Richard Chase

Tom Hingell
Shel Bon

Judd Nadler

Mi V. Gutierrez

Bill Pascrell Jr

Ed Pastor

Henry Bahrnt

Lynn Worley

Henry A. Waxman

Carolyn B. Maloney
John M. McHugh

Bart Sypak

Jim Oberstar

Louise M. Haugter

Walter Nalek

Jim Langerini

Tim Simmons

Red Strickland

Ben Higgins

Frank Pellone, Jr.

Patrick D. Kennedy

John LoBando

John B. Ruan

Jim Lund

Carolyn McCarthy

Robert Welch

Michael H. Michaud

Jim Hubron

John Breunlich

Mike Doyle

Stephane Pellerin

Betty McCall

Ed Warkentien

Minor Buss

Bel Sand

John F. Turing

Albert R. Wilson

Mota M. Loney

Maurice Diney

Tim Ryan

Ch. J. Johnson